

October 12, 2015

Tom Slocum, Chair, SRFB Review Panel
WA Recreation and Conservation Office
PO Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

RE: WRIA 13 Water Type Assessment, Phase IV (15-1176)

The WRIA 13 Deschutes Salmon Habitat Recovery Committee Lead Entity strongly supports the proposal from Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC) to utilize eDNA analysis within their water type assessment. WFC has been a valuable member of our lead entity for a decade now, offering sound science and applying technical rigor to the projects and the process.

This phase of the water typing project was highly ranked by both the Citizens and Technical Committees because of the ability of water typing to identify projects within our highest priority watersheds, in addition to addressing priority data gaps. With the addition of the eDNA analysis, the Lead Entity will be able to identify what species are present (or absent) in mainstem and tributary areas. This knowledge will assist us with our continuing efforts to refine our priority areas for restoration and conservation as we address and update the Puget Sound Chinook Recovery Plan.

The Lead Entity intends to use the eDNA as a guide to presence or absence of various species, so we can also use it to hone in on locations in the freshwater where the fish are residing. This information will inform decisions to refine locations and habitat types for various species at all life stages. We can use eDNA as a litmus test to guide our decisions regarding project types, specific life stages (determined by timing of sampling), stream reaches, etc. Just as we have used the water typing assessments over the years to make note of other restoration and conservation opportunities WFC field teams have identified while surveying, this eDNA enhancement is a very economical mechanism to garner massive amounts of additional information when boots are already on the ground in the watershed. If we wait to employ this technology, we will have to re-deploy those teams, increasing the taxpayer investment when these scarce funds could be wisely spent on other worthy projects. In short, this new information fills an important data gap that directly leads to project identification and development.

The Lead Entity has encouraged project sponsors to develop projects, seeing this endeavor as a wise investment of SRFB funds. The Water Typing proposal leverages SRFB dollars efficiently to both develop projects for the future while filling priority data gaps within priority watersheds now. We are confident that the work Wild Fish Conservancy proposes to perform within WRIA 13 is an ideal match for our limited allocation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support and comment and welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AHW', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amy Hatch-Winecka
Environmental Program Manager
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